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California State University, Monterey Bay

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**BILINGUAL PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT
IN THE EDUCATION OF THEIR SPECIAL-NEEDS CHILDREN**

Action Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts in Education

California State University Monterey Bay

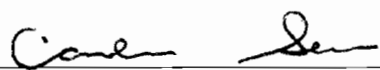
Spring 2009

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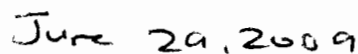
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Cleide Maciel

Approved by

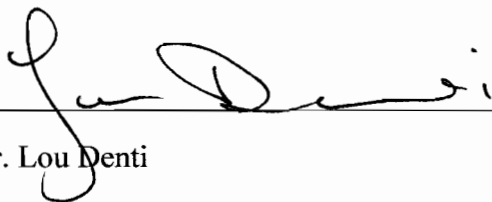


Dr. Carolina Serna, Thesis Advisor



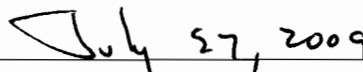
Date

Graduate Advisory



Dr. Lou Denti

MAE Coordinator



Date

Bilingual Parental Involvement in the Special Education

Abstract

Parental involvement in the area of special education continues to be a controversial issue in schools. The purpose of this action thesis research was to investigate parental involvement among Mexican immigrant parents in the special education of their children. Parent participation is important in light of the many decisions that are to be made, from the child's referral to eligibility determination and placement decisions. It was particularly important to see how parents perceived the special education system and how it pertained to their child. This study can inform parents in order to enhance their participation and increase their understanding of the special education system.

The participants selected for this study were comprised of three Mexican immigrant families from a local Head Start program who have at least one child in the special education program. Qualitative methods were used to explore the following research questions: How are families of bilingual special education students currently involved in the special education of their children? What are the parents' concerns, priorities, and feelings about their involvement in the education of their children in the special education program? The findings indicate increased parental participation among the participants in the study.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank those who have been instrumental in helping and guiding me throughout this thesis process. They deserve more than I can express in a few lines. Please accept my gratitude and appreciation for all your help. These people include Dr. Carolina Serna, Dr. Terry Arámbula-Greenfield, Dr. Nicholas Meier, Dr. Bill Jones, and Prof. Lou Denti.

I would like to acknowledge those persons who made this study possible. I thank the school officials, educators, and the Mexican families who allowed me to accompany them on their journey through the Special Education process.

Next, I would like to thank my mentor, Dr. Lucyann Geiselman, and Robert Harrington, Stacey Bakula, and Andy Grenier, for all their help and support. I sincerely value your friendship. Thank you dear friends!

Finally and most importantly, I extend my deepest thanks to my husband, Luiz and my sons, Peter and Paul whose depth of love and support amaze and humble me. Together you are my universe. I would not have accomplished this without all of your help and support. Thank you! Muchas Gracias! Obrigada!

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Each person's map of the world is as unique as the person's thumbprint. There are no two people alike. No two people who understand the same sentence the same way . . . So in dealing with people, you try not to fit them to your concept of what they should be. (Erickson, 2005, pp.1-2)

This study examines bilingual parental involvement in a special education program. Most parents care deeply about their children's education and academic progress. During my initial teaching experience, working at the Head Start Program, I have noticed that parents are the primary influence on their children's growth and development. The more families are involved in their children's education, the more positive learning and general life outcomes occur (Baker, Goesling & Letendre, 2002). Indeed, for culturally and linguistically diverse parents, education is a priority.

According to Darder and her colleagues, "Education is highly regarded as the social and economic equalizer, and as prerequisite to improve the social and economic status of school, and cannot work if there is no input from the community in the educative process" (Darder, Torres, and Guitierrez, 1997, p.68). Schools need to address the needs of the community they serve in order to provide appropriate programs that meet parents' needs and foster meaningful parent involvement. Careaga (1988) comments on the significance of parent participation among parents of English language learners as he states that, "For many parents of limited English proficient students, however, involvement may be hindered by language barriers, limited schooling, different cultural norms, or a lack of information." (p.2) This statement may describe the actual barriers of some of the parents in this study regarding parental involvement. Prior to setting up meaningful parental involvement to overcome these barriers, an educator needs to

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consider the needs of the community. It is important to consider these families' needs and then actually listen to their concerns.

Other research stresses the need of schools to take into consideration the “parents' language, culture, and attitudes toward special-needs children when developing and implementing a parent involvement program” (Baca & Cervantes, 1998, p 357). The Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (I.D.E.A) mandates coordinated educational participation. According to Nicolau & Ramos (1990),

[Parents], most of whom care deeply about the achievement and future of their children, are unfamiliar with the system of education in the United States, and do not understand how they are expected to relate to it, and do not know how or where to find assistance. (Nicolau & Ramos, 1990, p.15)

Parents can provide essential information to help and support the teachers of their children as well as the child in school, and more specifically in the special education program, when they participate more actively in school programs.

Statement of Problem and Purpose

The purpose of my research is to investigate and examine parental involvement among first generation immigrant parents of Mexican descent. Specifically, this study explores parents' concerns and priorities regarding the education of their special-needs children. This action research thesis addresses the following research questions:

- 1) How are families of bilingual special education students currently involved in the education of their children?
- 2) What are the parents' concerns, priorities, and feelings about their involvement regarding the education of their children in the special education program?

Some Mexican immigrant families may experience unique challenges when trying to understand the special education system. According to the U.S. Bureau of Census (2006), currently, 59 percent of the population identified as Hispanic consists of

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individuals of Mexican-American origin. Hispanics were 12 percent of California's population in 1970, an estimated 30 percent in 1998, and are projected to approach 50 percent by 2040. African Americans hover under 10 percent and are expected to maintain that rate. By the year 2080, the Mexican American population will comprise a little over 13 percent of the total U.S. population.

In my experience working with this diverse immigrant population, I have observed that Mexican immigrant families may need help in understanding the system that provides special-needs services to their children. Therefore, in order to create a comforting and welcoming environment for immigrant families, it is essential that school staff and teachers understand the cultural aspects that surround these families in order to assist them with school related matters.

Personal Interest Related to the problem

During my initial teaching experience, working with the Head Start program in 2001, I became interested in Mexican parental involvement in special education when I began to encounter this diverse population every day. I was a Head Start preschool teacher, serving mostly Mexican immigrant families who received special-needs services from the special education program, and I was not always sure that these parents understood the "special education program." I was concerned with the Spanish-speaking Mexican parents and their inability to be involved in their child's education due to long work hours, family commitments, and the language barrier. I could not help but wonder if they understood the programs and the necessity of their involvement when they did not fully understand the language or the system. In the process of working with the children

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of this culturally diverse population, I was able to experience firsthand the psychological, social, economic and political struggles of new immigrants adjusting to life in the United States. Since I am able to speak the Spanish language, by simply asking a few questions, I was able to assist and understand a culture and its people.

As a result of this interest in better understanding the issues and concerns of Mexican parents regarding their children's education my Master's Degree project was born. This project has been rewarding and very informative, and I enjoyed very much working one-on-one with Mexican immigrant families and migrant worker families. It is important to know these parents' views of their participation in the special education process, because they represent a growing sector of the population.

These families are extremely supportive of the education system, and especially what schools can do to improve the education of their children. I will begin by sharing my experience working with a four-year-old male student who attended weekly sessions with the speech and language service at the head start program. José spoke in a monotone manner and used a loud voice when he needed something. He had severe language and articulation difficulties. While his family worked in the fields, they were very supportive of José in school and were always willing to help. They could not speak much English, but they were present whenever an appointment was scheduled to talk about José's progress in the classroom, or whenever the speech and language pathologist had a concern. José's family took his school concerns very seriously, and it became a priority to see José succeed in school. They were very involved, taking home any

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materials they could get their hands on and then translating them into Spanish to help their son improve and overcome his difficulties.

When my son was found to have learning disabilities, I could not help but wonder if this related to our family's ability to speak English, since both my husband and I speak Portuguese as our primary language, having both emigrated from Brazil. Was speaking English as a second language a mitigating factor in his need for additional help? If so, what about those parents who speak little or no English? How do they assist their child? Does their command of the native language make a difference in how the child is judged? Is language the barrier for children where English is a second language?

The experience with my son's special education process helped me understand the perspective of Mexican families and the necessity to create an environment that fosters partnership between home and school. My continuous involvement with Mexican parents emerged from my personal experience witnessing working parents raising their children in a foreign country, with so limited time to attend school meetings due to work responsibilities and little knowledge of the special education process and the formal paperwork associated with the program. As a parent with a child needing learning assistance, I decided to investigate and I became actively involved in learning about the special education process and how to partner with the school to help my son improve his speech problem. My ability to speak English and my understanding of the special education program facilitated this process in ways that even English speakers find difficult sometimes. The greatest lesson I learned from their experience is that in order

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for children to succeed, parents need to be involved as a central figure in a child's life.

Based on my own experience, I believe that a child's educational development is enhanced when school, family, and community work collaboratively toward shared goals for the child.

Significance of the Study

The experiences of these families, from their own perspectives, may provide educators with new insights about how to further involve all parents in special education and to be more aware when a bilingual parent is involved. Increasing parental involvement can impact every child's achievement and success in school. Findings from the study will allow non-Spanish speaking educators to enter the world of Spanish-speaking parents for the benefit of both parties and the better development of the child. Hopefully, this study can assist educators who are unfamiliar with the challenges faced by Spanish-speaking parents. According to Turnbull & Turnbull (1986), "parental-specific barriers exist in families with children who have special needs, including psychological, attitudinal, cultural/ideological, communication and logistical issues." (p. 3)

Definition of Terms

Special Education

According to the Encyclopedia of Children's Health (2006), Special Education refers to a range of educational and social services provided by the public school system to individual with disabilities who are between 3 and 21 years of age.

Individual Education Program (IEP)

According to EdSource (2000), a student's Individual education Program (IEP) is a plan developed for a specific student that outlines what that student needs to learn in a specified period and what special services may need to be provided based on the

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student's ability. Special Education students have IEPs that sometimes require exemptions from tests or accommodations for testing, such as exam in Braille. (p. 2)

English Learner (EL)

According to the California Department of Education (2007), "An English learner is a student who is not sufficiently proficient in the English language to succeed in the school's regular instructional programs. The former designation was Limited English Proficient (LEP). Student's English proficiency is assessed annually." (p. 1)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

According to Christina A. Samuels (2004), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is defined as, "United States federal law that governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to children with disabilities. It addresses the educational needs of children with disabilities from birth to the age of 21. The IDEA was formerly known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, but has grown considerably since. IDEA became a federal standard by an act of Congressional adoption in 1975, but has been amended many times since. The IDEA was most recently amended in 2004, which was a significant update." (p. 2)

Limitations

This study focused on the experiences of three Mexican immigrant families who had at least one child enrolled in the local Head Start program receiving Special Education assistance with a designated Speech and Language (S/L) service in the areas of speech and language. The primary limitation of this investigation was the small number of participants; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized. The second limitation is that the study focused on the experiences of families with children receiving speech and language services and did not address the experiences of families with children who have severe disabilities, such as hearing and vision impairments, Down's syndrome, cerebral palsy, and so on.

Overview

This action thesis has five components. In Chapter One, I introduce the focus of my study and provide some background and the general context. In Chapter Two, I review the literature, focusing on parental involvement in Special Education. Chapter Three describes the methodology used to conduct this study. Chapter four presents the findings of the study and the final chapter, discusses the implications of the findings.

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Chapter II

Literature Review

“Special education is not an island. It is merely a subsystem within the larger system of Public education” (Skrtic, 1998, p.445).

All children have the right to an education. The primary purpose of this chapter is to review the literature on barriers minority families face when involved in the special education system. A major barrier that was found in the literature is parents’ inability to communicate in English. In this section, I will be reviewing the literature based on the research questions stated in Chapter one: 1) How are families of bilingual special education students currently involved in the education of their children? 2) What are the parents’ concerns, priorities and feelings about their involvement in the education of their children in the special education program? The discussion of the literature will focus on the history of parental involvement in special education, legislation, and barriers that keep parents from becoming involved in their children’s schooling.

Definition of Parental involvement

The National PTA defines parental involvement as “the participation of parents in every facet of the education and development of their children from birth to adulthood” (Salas et al., 2005). This is, however, a broad and general definition. A more specific working definition will be used for this study of multicultural and multilingual families with special needs children. Parents as partners includes “teaching and learning, recognition of parents as legitimate participants in school governance, fostering the sense of community and supporting the development of parenting skills” (Salas et al, 2005). These authors (Salas et al, 2005) focused on Mexican American families in their study of how special education teachers can create parent partnerships. They believe that Mexican

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American parents have been underrepresented in school-related decision-making and other traditional school activities. Part of the reason for this, they suggest, is that special education teachers do not have a deep understanding of the values and traditions of the Hispanic families. They state that “historically, the fact that these parents may not share mainstream values, traditions, and customs has often been perceived by special education teachers as part of the problem and not as valuable new sources of information”(p. 3).

History of Parental Involvement

Parental involvement in schools began before the turn of the nineteenth century. One of the well-known organizations in support of parental participation in schools, The National Congress of Mothers, was developed in 1897 (Butterworth, 1998). In 1924, the National Congress of Parents and Teachers was developed and is known today as the Parent Teacher Association, or the PTA (Butterworth, 1998). In some school districts, it has extended further to the PTSA, which currently involves parents, teachers, and students. The importance of parental involvement in education received national attention in the 1920s with the release of the 1924 National Congressional Handbook.

A parent-teacher association is an organization of parents, teachers, and others interested, for the purpose of studying reciprocal problems of the child, the home, and the school, and the relation of each to the community and the state, in order that the whole national life may be strengthened by the making of better, healthier, happier, more controlled, and more intelligent citizens. (Butterworth, 1998, p.44).

The above statement is even more significant today as the population grows exponentially. Parents are a major force in the lives of their children and now within the school system as well. The basis for true educational achievement is parents involvement in their child's education and teachers involved in the students' home lives. The family

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interviewed for this study mentioned that anytime they receive a note from school or a telephone call concerning their children, they go to the school and follow through with the school's requirements.

A growing body of research attributes parental involvement in education to children's learning in school. Baca & Cervantes' (1998) study shows that even though parental involvement in special education is mandated by the Individual Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), there is evidence in the literature that participation by LEP parents is limited. Some of the reasons for lack of parental involvement may be language barriers, illiteracy, different cultural norms, or lack of knowledge of how the school transfers information to parents (Careaga, 1988).

Legislation

IDEA regulations

According to the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY), Public Law 94-142 - Education of All Handicapped Children Act now called The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a U.S. law that came into existence to ensure services to children with disabilities throughout the nation. IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities. "Individuals with Disabilities Education (IDEA) was originally enacted by Congress in 1975 to make sure that children with disabilities had the opportunity to receive a free appropriate public education just like other children." (NICHCY, 2006 p.1). The Education of All Handicapped Children Act changed over the years reflecting new policies and procedures to serve students with disabilities. In 1990 Amendments to

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EHA (PL101-476) which changed the name to the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) took place. Subsequent amendments to IDEA have enhanced services to individuals with disabilities.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education ACT (IDEA) has two primary purposes. The first purpose is to provide an education that meets a child's unique needs and prepares the child for further education, employment, and independent living. The second purpose is to protect the rights of children with disabilities and their parents. IDEA regulations state that the parent must be informed and be part of the IEP. The law has been revised many times over the years. The most recent amendments were passed by Congress in December 2004, with final regulations published in August 2006 (Samuels, 2004 p. 4).

IEP process

An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is the first step in initiating parents' participation in their child's special education or the initial invitation for the special education process to begin. Parental involvement in the development of an IEP is complicated by the challenge of simply getting the parents to come to the school, plus the additional challenges of working with them when they arrive. Some Mexican parents view the IEP process as challenging because often they do not understand the process: it is not part of the education system in Mexico. Dabkowski (2004) states that despite the mandate by the IDEA amendment in 1997 that parents be included as members of the IEP team, actual parent participation in the decision-making process varies.

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The IEP is the plan developed by the parents, teachers and related services personnel that lays out how the child receives a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The IEP lays out the child's academic achievement and functional performance; describes how the child will be included in the general education curriculum; establishes annual goals for the child and describes how those goals will be measured; states what special education and related services are needed by the child; describes how the child will be appropriately assessed, including the use of alternate assessments; and determines what accommodations may be appropriate for the child's instruction and assessments.

Parents are to be informed of meetings, and then every effort is made for them to be able to attend. In addition, there are several rights that the parent has under the new IDEA law. The National Center for Learning Disabilities (2006) explains the rights of parents: Parents have the right to have a child evaluated by professionals outside the school district if they are not satisfied with the evaluation done by the school district. Parents must receive prior written notice of any action to be taken concerning the child. The child's educational records must be accessible to the parents, and the parents must agree to all the information contained in those records. According to the law, there is a process by which parents can make legitimate complaints. Despite the obvious benefits, the laws that support parental involvement and the availability and wide use of structures for parental involvement, minority families seem less involved in their child's schooling as white American families.

Barriers & Implications

Some of the barriers that Mexican parents may face when dealing with the special education system are described by Matuszeny et al. (2007). In their opinion, the barriers

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to parental involvement in minority families are “an inability to speak English, an unfamiliar or intimidating educational system, perceptions that their opinions are not valued by school professionals, direct or indirect discouragement from teachers or administrators, lack of trust that some parents hold for professionals who do not provide sufficient information about community services and rights, and lack of cultural sensitivity.” (p.8)

Many Mexican parents struggle when simply trying to communicate with school personnel regarding how to get in contact with them in case of an emergency, much less in regard to the education of their child. According to Chavkin (1993), culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) barriers specific to CLD parents include: (a) the language barrier and/or the inability to function effectively in English; (b) discomfort levels with an unfamiliar and intimidating education system; and (c) a perception that they are not wanted (p.4). Other research reveals that literacy also impacts the ability of these parents in many school-related tasks, including homework and home-school communication. Parents have difficulty in helping their children with homework if they do not know the mainstream language, curriculum, and/or expectations of the school system.

A study by Ramirez (2003) was conducted to determine the concerns of immigrant Latino parents regarding their children's schools in a California community which was 90 percent Latino. He interviewed twenty-nine mothers and fourteen fathers. Two of the major areas the mothers and the fathers identified as difficult for them were communication and the expectations placed on them. The biggest problem in communication was that on too many occasions there were no translators present for them at school board meetings or open house days, even though many of the teachers do not speak Spanish and it is widely known that some parents are not proficient in English.

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Sometimes schools have translators, while other times, at the upper level elementary schools, the translation is limited.

The perception of discrimination is always an issue for many immigrants, but its effects are often beyond name-calling and have a direct influence on the education of our children. McHalton and Correa (2005) did a study with twenty-five Mexican and twenty-five Puerto Rican mothers who had children with disabilities. Although the research was not done exclusively in the school environment, it offers explanations that are helpful in understanding the challenges that these parents face. The research found clear evidence of discrimination as a result of culture, disability and a combination of both. In the study, mothers reported discrimination in the work place, public places and social services departments. The discrimination sometimes took the form of inappropriate and hurtful comments made by strangers about the child with the disability. As a result of this discrimination, the mothers were not able to be assertive and isolated themselves physically and verbally, preferring to avoid social situations. This, of course, decreased their attendance at school functions or meetings with teachers.

Mexican parents feel discriminated against at times, especially when Anglo-Americans tell them to “go back to where they came from.” Discrimination is a principal factor in culturally diverse parents’ unwillingness to be involved in social situations such as school.

Tam and Heng (2005) also examined the difficulties faced by culturally and linguistically diverse parents in an intervention process such as special education. They list limited English skills, poverty, long working hours and isolation from mainstream culture as challenges and intimidations that prevent parents from becoming actively involved in school partnerships. They believe that work is a primary and major obstacle,

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as these working parents do not have the autonomy and flexibility in their work schedules to be involved in the children's school activities.

Parents are being asked to participate in an educational system with which they have no experience. A study by Garcia (1995) found that "fifty-six percent of Hispanic [immigrants] are functionally illiterate, compared to 46 percent for Blacks and 16 percent for Whites" (p. 314). Parents may need training to negotiate the sensitive cultural, linguistic and educational issues they face in U.S. schools. Furthermore, according to Garcia (1995), many low-income Hispanic families find the school system to be impersonal, insensitive to their needs and situations, and often disrespectful. Parents reported that they were afraid to speak up regarding issues because they were afraid the school would retaliate or they feared deportation. In general, "parents felt they were unaware of the traditions of the school life. Many of the parents felt it was not their place to attend or go to schools for events because they felt the teachers were better suited to teach and educate their children" (Ramirez, 2003 p. 95).

Research and practice has shown that parental involvement in their children's education is an important and rewarding achievement for both parent and child (Muscott, 2002; 1983; Rosado, 1994; Sileo Siles & Prater, 1986). Families partnering with schools improve school programs and better all students' learning. Knowing how well schools are involving families and being aware of the legal mandate for parents whose children are in special education to be involved or at least informed are steps forward and a guarantee to keep track of both sides of the equation, the parent and child and the teacher and child, and keep it balanced. Therefore, it is imperative to investigate how schools are involving families through communication and, more importantly, decision-making. A

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good starting point is for the teacher to fully understand the cultural aspects surrounding how these parents perceive school and their role in the system.

Summary

Historically, involving families in schools began before the turn of the nineteenth century. Parent involvement in special education is a recent development, since it became legal requirement according to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Research on parental involvement in the special education is sparse; however, most of the literature I reviewed described barriers to parent involvement in special education--for instance, limited English skills, poverty, discrimination, and isolation from mainstream culture--as challenges and intimidations that prevent parents from becoming actively involved in school. A major obstacle is that parents do not have the autonomy and flexibility in their work schedules to be involved in the children's school activities. In the following chapter, I will describe the methods used to conduct the interviews for this action research project based on these research questions.

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Chapter 3

Methodology

Research Design

As stated in Chapter One, this study examined the parental participation of Mexican parents who have children enrolled in a special education program. This study was a result of my interest in examining the parental involvement between the special education program and Head Start program. The aim of this action research study was to explore the following research questions: 1) How are families of bilingual special education students currently involved in the education of their children? 2) What are the parents' concerns, priorities, and feelings about their involvement regarding the education of their children in the special education program?

In order to address these research questions, I selected a qualitative method of research design involving data collection and triangulation from various sources (i.e., audio-taped interviews, observation journals and questionnaires) each of which is described in a subsequent section of this chapter. Through these methods of research I sought to understand the experiences of others and the meaning they make of their experiences (Ely et al., 1991). The data collected related specifically to the experiences of Mexican parents participating in their children's special education, as explained below.

Setting

This study took place at Marina School, with a large Mexican-American population attending elementary school K-5th grade and with a Head Start preschool. This is a long-established community where Spanish speakers are represented in large

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numbers in the school system. I gained entry to the community first through a community study. I selected this site because it had a partnership with the Head Start program and because this school site has a high population of Mexican-American students receiving special education.

Prior to starting my research, parents needed to sign a consent permission form. I conducted the first meeting at the Head Start program at Marina school. I found this site to be useful for recruiting participants due to the representation of Mexican-Americans in the student population. According to Wikipedia (2007) the demographic representation of the culturally diverse student population of the city of Marina consisted of the following “43.74% other/White, 14.34% African- American, 16.27% Asian, 2.10% Pacific Islander, 14.81% from other races, and 7.99% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race represented 23.19% of the population” (Wikipedia.org p.2). Therefore, from this school, I selected three Mexican parents who were interested in participating in the study.

Participants for this study

This study sought to examine parental involvement in the education of their children with special needs. The participants selected in this study consisted of parents and guardians of children receiving special education services in the local Head Start program. Participants for the study were recruited at a meeting held to inform parents about the study and to invite their participation. A sign-in list was created to see how many parents wanted to be interviewed. Out of the 10 families who signed up to participate, I selected three Mexican families to be interviewed. The reason I selected

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these three Mexican immigrant families was because these participants' children were enrolled in the local Head Start program, receiving speech and language services. The participants were parents of children whose ages ranged from to 3-5 years old. These students were enrolled in the Head Start program and received special needs services in the area of speech and language therapy. The Mexican parents met two specific criteria. First, these were parents of children attending a Head Start program at Marina school where I worked. Second, these parents had children with an Individual Education Plan (IEP), specifically a referral to Speech and Language Disorder (S/L) with a speech and language delay.

Participants were asked questions about their experience and concerns when dealing with their special-needs children. Data was analyzed and summarized. At least two interviews were conducted in participants' homes. The in-home interviews took approximately 45 minutes to an hour each. Each interview was audio-taped and later transcribed. Detailed notes compiled after each interview session were a part of the ongoing data collection.

As a part of this study, a parent workshop was developed in collaboration with the local County Special Education Local Plan Area Program (SELPA). The program provides specific information and workshops for parents, which are free and are taught in both languages, English and Spanish. This particular workshop at the local county office of education was to inform parents about the IEP process and their child's rights under IDEA. About six Mexican Spanish-speaking families were present at the workshop. The presentation was translated from English to Spanish to inform parents about benefits of

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their involvement when participating in their children's special education program (see Appendix B).

Data Collection

This section addresses the research procedures used for the study, including the data selection procedures and data analysis. Data collected through audio-taped interviews, field notes, and journal entries were obtained as ongoing data and later transcribed. Interviews were semi-informal, and included various questions. A questionnaire was developed and provided to these families (see Appendix A). Parents were interviewed in Spanish, and their responses were translated into English. The sources of data collection included written field notes and transcripts of interviews with parents.

All three of the Mexican immigrant families preferred to be interviewed in their homes. According to Patton (1990), taking notes can help locate important points later in the transcription analysis, so during the home interviews I kept notes brief in order to pay full attention to the participant. The personal journal I kept was an important organizational tool to catalog the things I needed to complete the study. The journal was used to provide a rich resource to log verbatim data. Both field notes and journals were used to provide a rich resource of information to make sense of the data later. The interview protocols were all semi-informal, and included open-ended questions. Parent interview questions served as a guide and interviews were flexible and open to ask questions in different order. Sometimes the respondents answered in ways that led to other topics that were not central to the study, however, this circuitous responding often allowed respondents to broaden their thinking about the question at hand often leading to a more complete answer.

Data Analysis

The data for this research were synthesized inductively, moving from specific raw data for which codes were established during initial analysis to broader themes or categories (Ely et al., 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The master copy categories were then re-evaluated, fine-tuned, and combined. The categories included the attitudes of families toward having a special-needs child, the amount of daily care requirements, relations between parents and local Head Start program personnel, and opportunities for involvement in the child's local Head Start program.

After I transcribed the interviews and recorded my observations, I decided to look for patterns by grouping raw data under category headings. I considered the information for thematic connections within and among the data categories. In order to analyze the data gathered by interviews, I decided to divide the information into two main categories to conduct this research directly with language and ethnicity. Those categories were parental involvement in the special education program and barriers encountered by parents.

As I followed the measures outlined by Ely et al. (1991, pp. 150-152), a general theme was synthesized from the information. Then thematic arguments were made that expressed the understandings and feelings and concern these families had when they participated in their child's education. The study and the discussion of the evidence was organized according to these thematic elements. The triangulation of the data helped support the development of the findings in three thematic main categories:

- (1) description of parent participation,
- (2) roles parents assumed,

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(3) barriers for parents language, time, work schedule, and transportation.

Summary

This chapter provided details of setting where the study took place, description of the participants, and discussion of data collection and how the data would be analyzed. The three major findings; (1) description of parent participation; (2) roles parents assumed; (3) barriers for parents: language, time, work schedule, and transportation are developed in more detail in the following chapter. The next step in the analysis process was to draw a conclusion to finalize the interpretation, using the findings to frame the relevance of Mexican immigrant's parental participation in special education.

CHAPTER 4

Results

This chapter describes the findings of this research study. The purpose of the study was to examine the involvement of Mexican-immigrant parents in the education of their special-needs children. The following research questions were explored: 1) To what extent, and in what manner, are the families of bilingual special-education students currently involved in their children's education?; 2) What are the parents' concerns, priorities and opinions regarding their involvement in the education of their children in the special-education program?

The two major findings from the study are as follows: 1) Parent's assume various roles in the education of their special-needs children. 2) The reasons for lack of parental participation include language barriers, time constraints, work schedule conflicts, a lack of transportation and child rearing obligations. In this chapter, I describe how I analyzed the interview data and discuss the findings.

Parents' participation in their child's special education involved the parents assuming various roles.

After a review of the data on participation of parents in the education process of special-needs children, I was interested in understanding parents' participation in IEP and other meetings, related to their child's special-education needs. From the information they provided, most of the parents were taking advantage of the opportunities for participation offered by specialists. They tried to be involved in everything from IEP meetings to volunteering in the classroom, in order to provide support to the teacher as needed, to enhance their child's education. The parents described their participation in

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terms of the various roles they assumed. The majority of parents described themselves as “learners.” Other categories included “parents who know their children well” and “parents who are simply providers of consent.” Consent, in the latter category refers to authorization to the school, and to speech and language pathologists to initiate the IEP process. The majority of parents who participated in the study are known to the school because they spend so much time there with their children, help with school tasks, and generally attempt to improve their children’s education.

Although the English knowledge of some of the parents is limited, most were able to keep abreast of developments. I observed that parents chose to be involved in a variety of ways and assumed different roles when involved in their child’s education. These roles included learners, child experts (who knew their child’s unique ways), child advocates, and providers of consent (giving the school professionals permission to initiate the IEP process) and information. Some roles may contradict each other, while others complement each other. For example, the learner versus the child expert role is contradictory, whereas the information provider role compliments both the learner and child expert role.

In the role of learner, parents reported receiving a far greater amount of communication and information about the special-education process. However, while parents do need to learn and understand more about the process, they did demonstrate a desire to understand the process and outcomes of the special-education system. The more informed the parent was, the better prepared they were to make decisions in the IEP process. Furthermore, in the role of child experts, parents knew their children well and wanted to inform and advocate for their child’s special education, by communicating

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with the school teacher and other professionals about their child's special needs. Parents in the role of providers of consent, were merely willing to give consent to school professionals to initiate their child's special education process.

Parents listened well and learned by asking questions. They expressed a need to participate generally in the special-education process. This was demonstrated by a willingness to obtain information from speech and language pathologists and to schedule meetings regarding decisions about their child's placement. Parents participated in IEP meetings in order to learn how their children would receive a proper education. In order to understand how the special-education system works, parents demonstrated a need to be actively involved. One parent compared and contrasted how the American and Mexican special-education systems differ. In Mexico, there is no speech and language program to help children improve their language and vocabulary. She explained that she had learned the difference by listening and participating in IEP meetings:

P#3 Ms. M: The education system here in the United States is different from the education system in Mexico. In Mexico, when children do not make progress in the primary grades, they tend to repeat the academic year since there are no IEP meetings. In the United States, schools help students improve their speech and language by providing speech and language services, whereas in Mexico the education system is not as advanced as in the United States. Students are often required to repeat an academic year, due to their speech immaturity.

Most parents understood their role as parents in the IEP process. They listened and asked questions whenever they did not understand the process, but sometimes translators were needed. Parents provided their consent throughout the eligibility process

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and signed the forms for the evaluation process to commence. Even after they had given permission for their children to be evaluated by professionals at the eligibility meeting, parents still considered themselves as learners. P#3, Ms. M., said, “I listened and asked questions, how these special programs can benefit my son?”

Parents who assumed the role of experts could describe their child’s unique ways and well-being and knew their special-needs child well. Given the intimate nature of the parent-child relationship, P#2, Ms. G., stated: “My son has problems in expressing himself when he speaks English as a second-language, and in Spanish I have to talk to him three or four times in order for him to understand.” Another parent described a unique way that her child behaved in school. P#3, Ms. M.: “My son does not speak a lot of English in school because he feels that his English is not well-spoken. However, at home he speaks English with his siblings.” This mother felt she knew her child in a unique way, a way in which he had never expressed himself in school, and she wanted other school officials to know.

In the table below, I have listed parents’ willingness to be involved in various ways. Parents take on a variety of roles when participating in their child’s special education. The following situations emerged when parents are involved in special education. Table 1 displays the various roles that the parents assumed.

Table I

Parents Willingness to be Involved in the Special Education Needs of their Children

Parents’ role	Learner	Child expert	Consent providers	Information providers
P# 1	listened	Knew their child well	Eligibility process	Tell their child about special ed.

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P# 2	learned	Unique	Decision-making	Help child understand the process
P# 3	asked questions	Knew child better than the school	Last say	Tell child about testing
P#1,2,3	listened and learned	Talents	Authority	Explain the process to their child

The parents also demonstrated a need to provide information from the school and professionals to their children. P# 1, Ms. R., states that she told her son, “You will start to attend speech and language therapy at school in order to improve your articulation, for a better command of English as a second language.”

Even though the lack of proficiency in English was a barrier for most of the parents, these families felt it was important to participate in their children’s education. A couple of mothers mentioned that when they attended school meetings, they would sometimes bring a family member who was more proficient in English to interpret the meeting in Spanish for them. Other parents stated that although they did not attend many meetings with language pathologists or specialists, they would frequently ask the teacher for information regarding their child’s special-education program. These parents considered themselves very involved due to the amount of time they spent at the school. Most parents in this study made the most of their opportunities to help their children and to be involved in everything related to their children’s special education. Their involvement included attending IEP meetings, volunteering in the classroom, attending

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conferences, helping with classroom activities and providing help at home with homework.

The table below explains parents' willingness to participate in their child's special education. Examples of parents' participation include attending IEP meetings, involvement in classroom tasks, and involvement in the school and curriculum activities in which teachers improve their child's speech problems. As the following table shows, parents participated in a variety of ways.

Table II

Varieties of Parent Participation

Participation in the Process	Parent #1	Parent #2	Parent #3	Parent #1,2,3
	PTA meetings and other school events	IEP Meetings	Conference	Classroom task
Volunteer	Eligibility meetings	Homework		Reading/Math

Reasons for lack of parental participation include language barriers, time constraints, work schedule conflicts, a lack of transportation, and child rearing obligations.

Most of the Mexican parents' lack of participation was due to language barriers, time constraints, work schedule conflicts, a lack of transportation, and other child rearing obligations. These barriers prevented parents from attending meetings. When considering their attitudes toward parent participation, two of the three pairs of Mexican parents' stated that they wanted to be involved and participate in their child's education process. One of the parents, Ms. M., described her participation this way:

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I enjoyed making myself available to participate in school. However, my special-needs child requires much more attention than my daughter who is in regular school. Due to the amount of information released from school professionals, the involvement in special-education process seems to be more time consuming and intense.

Although all the participants mentioned that participation in the education process of their children with special needs is important, most of them stated that the most important as well as the most time-consuming form of participation is that which takes place at home.

Some of the families reported that once they had recovered from the initial shock of realizing that their child needed special care, the first thing they wanted to do was to learn all they could about their child's disabilities, by talking to their child's teacher, special-education specialists and speech and language therapists. Despite their lack of understanding of the English language, all of these parents realized their specific rights and responsibilities and understood that it was important for them to learn all they could so that their children would receive an appropriate education and the services to which they are entitled.

Parents expressed concern when participating in their child's special education. P#2, Ms. G., said, "It is difficult for me to attend the meetings in the school. Sometimes my husband needed to take time off from work to stay home with my other child. I don't like babysitters." A lack of time to participate in school meetings is a barrier since often both parents work. Another issue is the lack of childcare for other siblings in the family. Making childcare arrangements becomes difficult for migrant families and recent immigrants as they no longer have an extended family to support them with free childcare

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services. Recent immigrants have often not formed close, trusting relationships with other families with whom they can leave their children for brief periods.

All of the special-needs children in the study were born in the United States. However, the parents of the three families I interviewed had all immigrated from Mexico. Many of the families shared that they heard that the educational system in the U.S could offer advantages not available in Mexico to their special-needs children. Most of the families were satisfied with the education their child was receiving in the United States. They also said that they had found the educational opportunities they were seeking. They were all also of the opinion that in Mexico the services would have come to them automatically if their child had severe disabilities such as autism or schizophrenia. However, for speech and language services in the U.S. they had to learn how to be advocates for their special-needs children and to match them with the system.

In this chapter, my goal was to provide evidence for each theme from the data gathered by interviewing the immigrant Mexican parents. As mentioned above, the focus of this research was on bilingual-parental involvement in the education of their special-needs children. The study examines the following research questions: 1) How are families of bilingual special education students currently involved in the education of their children? and 2) What are the parents' concerns, priorities and opinions regarding their involvement in the education of their children in the special-education program?

Based on my interviews, most of these Mexican immigrant families were somewhat involved in the education of their children with special needs. Despite the barriers and concerns about their inability to communicate, all parents interviewed seem to strive to make sure that their child was receiving a proper special education. The data gathered in this research is taken mainly from these Mexican immigrant families'

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interviews. In conclusion, these Mexican immigrant families offer the following suggestions to improve parental involvement in the educational process of their children with special needs:

- Provide support groups to parents;
- Provide meetings in English with Spanish translation;
- Schedule meetings at convenient times for families; and
- Support student learning by sending materials home.

Summary

This chapter examined the results of my investigations, and how the data supported and answered my research questions. In chapter five, I will review the purpose and results of my study.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion and Action Plan

Initial Problem and Purpose

The IDEA Amendments of 2004 placed emphasis on parental involvement in the special education program. This study was driven by my desire to examine how parents were involved in the special education of their children. This study explored parents' concerns and priorities regarding the education of their special-needs children. This action research thesis addresses the following research questions: 1) How are families of bilingual special education students currently involved in the education of their children? 2) What are the parents' concerns, priorities, and feelings about their involvement regarding the education of their children in the special education program?

In search of answers to my research questions, I interviewed three parents about their involvement in the Special Education program their children were enrolled in. Studies show that literature on parent involvement in general education is quite extensive, however, not so extensive in special education, and bilingual education. Furthermore, there is a growing body of literature that deals specifically with parental involvement in bilingual special education settings (Baca & Cervantes, 1998; Harry, 1992b).

All three families I interviewed demonstrated great interest in participating in the school activities as well as providing support at home. The conclusion was that these families' limited levels of English knowledge were not barriers to the education of these children, nor to their parents' participation at the school. With regard to my first research question: "*How are families of bilingual special education students currently involved in the education of their children?*" even the participants with the most limited knowledge of English were able to participate in their child's education. Two mothers, Ms. M. and

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Ms. G., stated that when they went for meetings at schools, they usually used another family member with English knowledge to act as an interpreter. Other parents stated that although they did not attend many meetings with school officials and education specialists, they were in frequent telephone contact with their child's program coordinator, who was bilingual and provided great resources to families.

When considering their attitudes toward parent participation, most of the participants stated that they wanted to be involved and wanted to participate in their children's education process. Although the involvement in special-needs children's education seems to be time-consuming, what makes the difference is its intensity. Ms. R, one of the parents, described it this way:

It is hard since I need to participate more in my child's special education. I knew that my other children didn't need me the way my five year old girl did in the Head Start program. They were able to let me know if something was a problem at the school. My young child is not capable to telling me that. She informs me of things that are happening, but I never have any idea if what she says is accurate. It is hard also since she needs therapy, and I have to assist her with her therapy in the house.

All of these parents realized their specific rights and responsibilities, and it was important for them to learn all they could so that their children would receive a proper education and the services to which they were entitled.

Furthermore, with regard to my second research question:

“What are these parents’ concerns, priorities, and feelings about their involvement

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regarding the education of their children in the special education program?"

three of the parents specifically hinted at lack of English proficiency as a barrier to receiving services for their children. A mother whose daughter has "severe language impairment" stated that she had no idea that the schools in the Mexican community where she lived were good enough, as compared to the schools near the town where she had lived earlier and in which the population was "largely American." She said she thinks that there is a general lack of interest in the Mexican community in education and a deficiency of cooperation between the school board and the community.

When I asked parents what should be done to increase parental participation in their children's education, they offered a variety of suggestions, including the need to establish a place, either a support group in the schools or in a separate location, where the families could get together with other families and their children to help them exchange information and experience. Some of the parents had the idea that the families themselves must have a strong voice in the operation of such groups and that the groups would offer not only the opportunity for parents and children to get to know one another, but also such different services as English as a second language sessions, workshops with a focus on parenting, discussion groups, and so on.

Discussion and Implications for Practice

All of the families in this research were of the opinion that the special education services their special-needs children received in this country were much better than those that would be accessible to them in Mexico or another non-US country. This was a reality for both the families whose children were born in the United States and those who came

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to our country for the sake of their children with special needs. Unlike the families described by Carrasquillo (1990), most of these families seemed completely well-informed about the educational system, their rights and the facilities available to their children. They stated, however, that it was necessary to keep after the professionals all the time to get the information they needed about their children's education. This is consistent with Harry's (1992b) finding that families who are from a different cultural and linguistic background are at a disadvantage when dealing with this country's educational system.

In light of the findings in my research, it is obvious that the parents in this study who had a limited knowledge of English were those who had the minimum knowledge of the educational system or of their rights. Some of these parents stated that when dealing with the special education system, they needed to be with someone who would translate the information into Spanish since they did not speak English fluently enough to understand "the system."

Parents' suggestions to enhance parental participation in schools are summarized below:

- Family support groups need to be accessible in all schools providing special education service.
- There must be centers capable of offering a wide range of activities, not only for parents but also for the special-needs children and their siblings.
- Parenting classes should be offered.

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- Child care should be provided so that parents can attend meetings. Such care was available for the children and siblings at the school attended by one of the children.
- There must be scheduled meetings at times convenient for working parents and transportation provided for those who need it.

The results of practice are described under two main categories: "What these children can do is vastly more important than what they cannot do," and "Parents of these children need to be viewed as very rich resources." I discovered that parents are rich resources when advocating for their special-needs children. I realized that not only did the Mexican parents in this study have a great deal of knowledge about their own children but as speakers of another language and members of another culture, they had a great deal of information about their own culture in addition to the skills of their various professions and occupations. From what the families related both directly and indirectly, it seemed that, generally speaking, special education personnel did not see the parents as important resources in their children's education. At times educators and administrators seemed to have an almost adversarial relationship with the families. Most other researchers (e.g., Alexander, 1982) have discovered that professionals usually view parents of special-needs children as lacking information rather than as rich sources of knowledge. (p.8)

Benefits of Parents' Involvement

Numerous studies show the benefits of parental involvement in their child's school and education are numerous and sometimes difficult to count. Peña (2000) examined a number of studies showing that parental involvement produced measurable

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gains in student academic achievement, as well as increased positive behavior and emotional development, better school attendance, improved homework completion rates, decreased violence and substance abuse rates, higher self-esteem and higher graduation rates. The Mexican parents I spoke with believed that their involvement in the special education of their children helped them improve their own speech and language beyond what they could imagine and faster than they ever expected. According to Bermudez (1994), there are benefits when involving culturally and linguistically diverse parents in the special education of children. The benefits to be gained by involvement of culturally and linguistically diverse parents are: "(a) improved student academic achievement, (b) increased language achievement, (c) improved overall school behavior and attendance, (d) sustained achievement gains, (e) improved attitudes and interest in science among adolescents, and (f) increased cognitive growth." (p. 7)

Another study that describes the benefits of parental involvement was done by Tam and Heng (2005). They emphasize the importance of a healthy school and home partnership which provides professionals with more opportunities to reinforce a child's behavior at school when the behavior is understood and expected at home, as well as feedback from parents that helps improve instructional programs. (p.225) They describe how parents can get a better understanding of their child's needs and the teachers' objectives when the two participants are in constant but easy communication. There are also benefits to the parents, especially culturally and linguistically diverse parents, being involved. According to Salas et al. (2005), it promotes confidence in the parents, fostering more positive feelings about their role as parents, increasing parents' willingness to participate in school-related activities, volunteering their time, and

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increasing parents' interaction with their children's teachers and principals, not to mention the availability of the parent for the child.

Suggestions to Facilitate Parent Participation

Parents provided several suggestions for improving parental participation. For instance, parents felt that more needed to be done in order to provide more convenient times for families to participate. All three families interviewed for this study suggested the following to improve parent participation: In order to facilitate parent and school communication and support parent participation, parents need be enrolled in English classes to lessen the language barrier. Parents need to have support groups placed in the school that would help them advocate for their children's rights. IEP meetings need to be at convenient times for parents to participate. Parents welcome school activities that support their children's learning.

Schools may facilitate parental involvement by increasing parental participation in their children's education. Different researchers have put forward suggestions and recommendations for improving parental involvement. Matuszny et al. (2007) state that an effective plan to develop collaborative relationships should "include parents in the collaborative relationship from beginning to end; help teachers better understand the needs of families from culturally diverse backgrounds; and include activities designed to strengthen the trust that culturally diverse parents hold for education professionals in the IEP process." (p.34) They present a progressive plan of four phases which they hope will diminish or remove the barriers that deter culturally diverse families from becoming involved in the IEP process. The plan is flexible and incorporates annual revision, allowing teachers to improve, support and maintain the family's involvement and collaborative partnership in the IEP process. It starts with bringing the parents and

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teachers together in a celebratory and festive environment. Trust is then built by sharing information with the parents and giving them choices and opportunities to share in the decision-making process. Teachers must then maintain communication with the parents, respecting the cultural norms of relationships. A reflection phase ends the first cycle. It is hoped that such a plan will improve the parents' willingness to be involved in their child's IEP.

Salas et al. (2005) state strongly that for best practices in developing effective parent partnerships between Mexican-American families and special education teachers to take place, some things are necessary and must be taken into consideration. (p.4) The first is not stereotyping or assuming anything, remembering that families differ in linguistic ability, socioeconomic levels, educational levels and acculturation levels. Establishing trustworthiness and credibility are important to these families. Teachers should find out the literacy proficiency of the families. Sometimes the jargon of special education can be daunting to them. It is helpful to find out which language the family is fluent in and feels most comfortable using. Sending home notes and homework in a language that the parent is not comfortable working in can make the parents feel devalued. The parents are unable to respond to these notes, and there is the risk that the family may not understand what is being asked of them. Having negative experiences with language at IEP meetings can cause the families to retreat into silence. Special educators must understand the acculturation level of the families. The length of time that the families have been in the US affects their views on education and the role that they must play. Families born in Mexico may adhere to traditional values that dictate that the child's education must be left to the school and their involvement is therefore minimal.

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Some may even think that their child's failure or academic problems are the parent's fault and may not see fit to question the practices of the school or the teachers.

Conclusions

The most important issue is for schools to see parents as integral partners in their child's education. The action piece to this study was to see how involved these three Mexican families were: despite their lack of proficiency in the English language, they still want to participate in the special education of their children. Regardless of the economic, ethnic, or cultural background of the family, parental involvement in a child's education is a major factor in determining the child's success in school. Parental involvement with children with special needs is more than recommended; it is vital (Nieto 2000). According to Epstein (1995), "[i]t is not only the responsibility of the parents to help their children succeed in school, but also the responsibility of the school to make an appropriate connection with the LEP parent." (p.15) Constant adjustments must be inclusive, as integration into a rapid-paced society requires that all parents, including immigrant parents, have high motivation and clear rewards with regards to their life and their child's education. The process of adjustment is contingent on the motivation level and preparation possessed by family, the social and cultural knowledge possessed by the teachers and school, and the institutional responsiveness to the needs of the children and their families. (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991, p. 11)

Parental involvement is vital, especially since according to Inger (1992), Hispanic youth are considered to be the "most under-educated major segment of the U.S. population" (Inger, 1992, p. 1), and are "more than twice as likely to be undereducated as all groups combined." (Chavkin, 1993, p. 1) Latino students in particular, have the

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highest dropout rate in the United States (Carger, 1997; Gibson, 2002; McKissack, 1999; Scribner et al. 1999). Sanchez (1996) argues that “parent involvement in the child’s Individual Education Plan (IEP) development is crucial, and Hispanic parents need to be active participants in their child’s educational lives and better consumers of special education services.” (p.24)

The parents participating in this study expressed their desire to be involved in their children’s education, but some of them just didn’t know how to become involved. This is when it becomes an educator’s responsibility to initiate contact and reach out to families in a language they understand in order to enlist and ensure family participation in school programs. A teacher may think that a family is uncaring because of their inability to respond to what they do not understand. Another way to engage a family is by sharing information on what is happening in the school with families, inquire about the families’ life and culture at home, and to learn about the child’s experience in the family. I have found that parents like to stay involved; however, it needs to be a meaningful and ongoing process, with a long-term goal, rather than one event or one day. Parents need to keep a commitment to open, continuous, two-way communication and receptive attitudes to the practices of teachers and principals (Dauber & Epstein, 1993).

Unnecessary and unhelpful boundaries between school and home can become barriers when the respect for a teacher’s authority outweighs parental involvement. Trusting the teacher without reproach can interfere with families becoming advocates for their children. While parental participation is not universally defined, the concept, term and definition of parental involvement have plagued schools for years. Sheldon (2002) loosely defined parental involvement as the investment of resources in children by

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parents. "For many schools, parental involvement entails connecting parents to their child's school by creating familiarity with the teacher and facilities." (Peña, 1999, p.6) Research has revealed that if more meaningful parental involvement is desired, schools need to consider more ways to include and involve parents. Gomez and Greenough (2002) state that "like many school-wide efforts, meaningful parental involvement requires a systematic development of programs designed to include and not exclude families." (p.10)

The results from this study can be used to generate more suggestions for positive interaction between home and school. The more positive results of parental participation in education could be because of legislation or because schools are taking a more active role in providing the best possible services to students and parents in terms of communication and decision-making opportunities. Change happens only when we embrace diversity and evolve in our minds. In order to transform our communities and schools for the better, we need to empower parents to advocate for their children and become involved in their education, regardless of their social or economic status, their primary language, or their ethnic background. I would like to see the development of more equitable ways in which schools could support and facilitate Mexican parental involvement. Who is responsible to get parents involved? According to Pedroza's (1999) research "some staff members tended to think of parent involvement as a parent responsibility to be initiated by parents, rather than as a collaborative responsibility of the entire school community." (p. 38) Nevertheless, parent involvement must be a collaborative effort. Furthermore, school administrators need to create an environment where parental participation is welcomed and utilized.

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Appendix A**Note: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:**

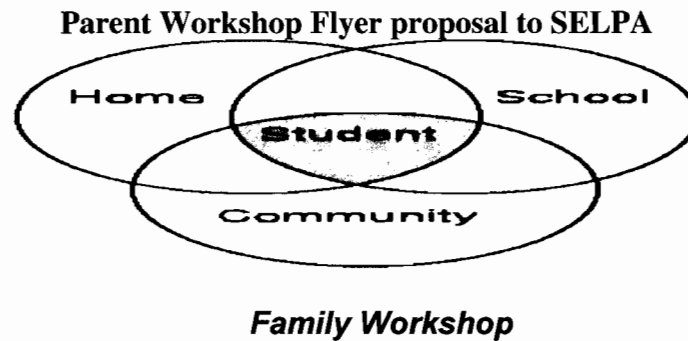
Q1: How are you involved in your child's special education?	1.Volunteer in the classroom	2- Parent meeting & IEP eligibility meetings	3- Work at home with learning activities	4- Work at school supporting their children
Parents responses				
Q2: In what ways would you like to be involved?				
Parents responses:				
Q3: Does school translate every document?				
Parents response				
Q4: Are you satisfied ; administration, eligibility, and decision-making				
Parents response				
Q5: What are the challenges to participating more frequently?				
Parents response				
Q6: Do you communicate well with your child's teacher?				
Parents Response				
Q7: Do you have any concerns or matter that schools is not addressing?				
Parents response				
Q8: Do you feel				

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the special education is assistant your child?				
Parents response				

Summary of Parent Interviews

1. When you think of your participation in your child's special education how do you describe your participation, not involved, somewhat involved, or very involved?
2. In what ways would you like to be involved? For example, school meetings, school activities, conferences with the teacher(s), helping your child with school work?
3. What kind of resources are available in your school that foster parental involvement in special education? Does the school translate every document from special education into Spanish? Do you feel that the school has contributed to your child's education? If so, how?
4. Are you satisfied with the?
 - Knowledge of the process
 - Administration of the process
 - Eligibility decision
5. Who Informs you about your child's problems and who reports your child's progress to you?
 6. Do you feel this program is assisting your child in addressing their needs? If so, how?
7. Do you have any concerns or matters that you feel the school is not addressing in the areas of special education? If so, what are they?
8. In your opinion, what else do you feel schools could do to meet the needs of parents when involving them in the special education program?

Appendix B –

Promoting Family School Partnerships in Special Education

When: Date and Time:

Where: Location:

Who can attend: Target Audience: The workshop will be useful to special education teachers and parents, psychologists, and administrators.

Description of workshop: This workshop will provide an intensive look at the issues in regard to IDEA 2004.

1) **IDEA: Understanding the Special Education Process**

The workshop outlines the basic principles of special education with materials to help parents organize and understand their child's special education records. Topics include free, appropriate public education, evaluation, resolving disagreements, and the Individualized Education Program (IEP).

2) **The Individualized Education Program (IEP) workshop explores the essential components of IEP development, including evaluation, team planning, resolving disagreements, and an expanded section on writing measurable goals.**

